DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 105 791 HE 006 479

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TITLE	Minority Admissions to Large Universities: A Six Year National Survey. Research Report No. 3-75.
INSTITUTION	Maryland Univ., College Park. Cultural Study Center.
SPONS AGENCY	American Coll. Personnel Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	75
NOTE	19p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS	*Admission (School); *Admission Criteria; Enrollment Trends; Financial Policy; Financial Problems; *Higher Education; *Minority Groups; Negro Students; Surveys; *Universities
IDENTIFIERS	ACT; American College Test; SAT; *Scholastic Aptitude Test

ABSTRACT

The admissions offices of 109 large, primarily white universities returned a questionnaire on their minority admission policies for the sixth consecutive year. The median percent of new black freshmen was down to 5 percent nationally in 1974 compared to 6 percent in 1973, with the largest drops occurring in the Middle States and Western regions. Schools tended to use fewer selection criteria for all students, and were less apt to use high school record combined with ACT or SAT. Schools with special programs for blacks increased to 62 percent, compared to 50 percent in 1973. Twenty percent of the schools said they were offering less financial aid in 1974. Also 16 percent of the schools linked tighter budgets to fewer incoming minority students. Additionally, 14 percent of the schools were limiting their minority student recruiting activities. Eleven percent of the schools cited other effects such as a cutback in support services or a closer coordination among university agencies. It appears that the emphasis given minority admissions has peaked and is now declining. The importance of continuing to monitor the progress of universities in handling minority admissions and retention programs seems even more clear in times of stress in higher education. For it is in such times that we run the greater risk of losing what gains have been made in minority student education, while we are preoccupied with seemingly more pressing issues. (Author)

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1975

MINORITY ADMISSIONS TO LARGE UNIVERSITIES: A SIX YEAR NATIONAL SURVEY

William E. Sedlacek and Judy P. Clarke

Research Report # 3-75

This study was sponsored and partially funded by Commission IX (Assessment for Student Development) of the American College Personnel Association.

The admission of black students to institutions of higher education has been one of the more controversial and emotional issues in education in recent years. Unfortunately there has often been more talk, less action and even less research on the topic than most people realize. In particular, there has been a lack of longitudinal information on how many blacks are entering our colleges and universities and what criteria of admission are being used by schools to admit blacks.

The Cultural Study Center and Commission IX (Assessment for Student Development) of the American College Personnel Association have sponsored an annual survey of the large predominantly white U.S. universities since 1969. Previous studies in the series (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970; Sedlacek, Brooks and Horowitz, 1972; Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973; Sedlacek, Lewis and Brooks, 1974; Sedlacek, Merritt and Brooks, 1975) have indicated a number of trends. New black freshman enrollment rose slowly but steadily from 3% in 1969 to 6% in 1973. The Middle States area schools have made the greatest gain from 1969 to 1973 (6% vs 13%). Geographical areas are based on the regional accrediting associations reported in the higher education directory of the U.S. Office of Education (1972).

Schools were tending to use high school record and standardized tests to admit all students, regardless of race, more in 1973 than in the previous few years, but less weight was being given such variables or recommendations in admitting blacks to special programs. Additionally, many fewer schools were using different admissions

criteria to admit blacks to regular programs (14% in 1973, 26% in 1972, 20% in 1971, 36% in 1970 and 45% in 1969) despite evidence that the same admissions criteria are not equally fair for all students. Special programs for Native Americans and Spanish speaking students had increased while special programs for blacks had decreased in the last few years.

The schools most successful in enrolling blacks tended to emphasize academic programs (special or general), while the least successful schools tended to emphasize money in recruiting black students. The prospective minority student might be apt to say, "Look, I know I am going to have to struggle financially but I will make it somehow. Tell me what I can learn and get involved in at your school." Also schools that were able to streamline red tape and admit black students on the spot were more successful in enrolling blacks.

In 1973, for the first time in the history of the survey, public universities were admitting more black freshmen than private universities (7% versus 6%). This is particularly important since private schools have been the trend setters in minority admissions.

The purpose of the present study was to resurvey the large U.S. universities to continue to monitor the trends and questions studied above. A particular emphasis in this survey was to obtain information on the impact of tighter university budgets on minority admissions programs.

Method and Results

The admissions offices of 110 universities were sent a questionnaire concerning their minority admissions policies. The institutions sampled were large, primarily white schools throughout the United States. Schools in the major athletic conferences and large, independent institutions were included in the sample. If an individual state (including the District of Columbia) was not represented by the sampling method used, the largest school in the state was included. The questionnaires were mailed out in November, 1974 and telephone follow-up procedures resulted in a total return of 109 questionnaires (99%). Of the 109 schools reporting, 89 (81%) were public and 20 (19%) were private.

1. *What is your approximate undergraduate enrollment? About how many new freshmen matriculated this fall? About how many of your newly matriculated freshmen are black?*

Table 1 shows the range of enrollment, total enrollment and black enrollment by six geographical regions for schools in the sample. The median total enrollment was 13,000 while median freshman enrollment was 2,685 and median black freshman enrollment was 106. The median percent of black freshmen was 5 percent. One school had 18% blacks and seven schools had no blacks.

Enrollments are higher for 1974 than 1973 (median total = 12,000; median freshmen = 2,500; median black freshmen = 100) but the median percent of black freshmen has decreased to 5%, from 6% in 1973, 5% in 1972, 4% in 1971 and 1970, and 3% in 1969.

Table 2 shows that the largest drops in percent of black freshman enrollment occurred in the Middle States and Western

regions, which have been the leading regions in enrolling black freshmen over the years. However, all regions either lost or remained constant on their median percent of black enrollment.

2. *Briefly describe your regular admissions criteria for new freshmen.*

Table 3 shows that high school rank (HSR), high school grade point average (HSGPA) and standardized tests (Scholastic Aptitude Test [SAT] and American College Test [ACT]) remain as the most common admissions criteria employed by schools. Recommendations are used by 21 (19%) of the schools and extracurricular activities and interviews are used infrequently. Only 9 (8%) had open admissions, which is defined as requiring only a high school diploma or its equivalent for entry.

The mean number of admissions criteria employed by all schools was 2.29 in 1974, 2.90 in 1973, 2.77 in 1972, 3.17 in 1971, 3.32 in 1970 and 2.05 in 1969. Thus the trend in using fewer admissions criteria since 1970 has continued, although the percentage of schools employing open admissions has also dropped, 8% in 1974, 16% in 1973 and 1972, 12% in 1971 and 1970, and 10% in 1969. The use of recommendations also followed the trend toward less use in recent years, 19% in 1974, 28% in 1973, 29% in 1972, 33% in 1971, 34% in 1970 and 13% in 1969.

Additionally 67 (61%) of the schools reported using either HSGPA or HSR combined with SAT or ACT scores in 1974. This compares to 86% in 1973, 82% in 1972, 80% in 1971, 82% in 1970 and 99% in 1969.

3. *Do you have special programs in which blacks (or mostly blacks) are enrolled? If yes, please briefly describe the criteria for admissions to the program(s).*

Table 4 shows that 68 schools (62%) had special programs in which mostly blacks were enrolled compared to 50% in 1973, 54% in 1972, 60% in 1971, 52% in 1970 and 48% in 1969. Eleven of the 68 schools (16%) had programs for local residents only, compared to 24% in 1973, 28% in 1972, 14% in 1971 and 20% in 1970. Compared to regular admissions criteria, relatively more weight was given to HSGPA, HSR and recommendations and less weight to standardized tests for special programs. While this follows the general pattern of previous years, the use of recommendations among schools with special programs decreased sharply to 7% (5/68) in 1974, compared to 24% in 1973, 43% in 1972, 23% in 1971, 38% in 1970 and 43% in 1969.

Additionally the trend toward less emphasis on HSGPA, SAT and ACT in admitting blacks to special programs continued in 1974. HSGPA was used by 6 of 68 schools (9%) in 1974, compared to 20% in 1973, 36% in 1972, 26% in 1971, 46% in 1970 and 55% in 1969. SAT was used by 2 of 68 schools (3%) in 1974, compared to 13% in 1973, 26% in 1972, 18% in 1971, 39% in 1970 and 57% in 1969. ACT was always used less than SAT but was down to 3 of 68 (4%) in 1974, compared to 9% in 1973, 12% in 1972, 9% in 1971, 5% in 1970 and 10% in 1969.

4. *Aside from special programs, are blacks admitted under the same criteria as are all regular new freshmen? If no, please briefly describe how the "black" criteria differ from the "regular" criteria.*

Fourteen (13%) of the 109 schools used different regular admissions criteria for blacks in 1974 compared to 14% in 1973, 26% in 1972, 20% in 1971, 36% in 1970 and 45% in 1969. "Different

criteria of admission" was generally interpreted by admissions officers as referring to different applications or cutoff points of the same variables used in regular admissions. Private schools tended to use different admissions criteria more than public schools in 1974 (35% versus 8%), compared to similar differentials in past years: 17% versus 11% in 1973, 50% versus 20% in 1972, 52% versus 20% in 1971, and 75% versus 26% in 1970; the higher percent being private in all cases (see Table 5).

Table 5 shows the data by type of school (public or private). Private schools had a slightly higher median percent of new black freshmen (5% versus 4.5%). This differential has been: 1973, private 6%, public 7%; 1972, private 6%, public 5%; 1971 and 1970, private 6%, public 4%. Data were not reported for 1969. More public than private schools had special programs in 1974 (65% versus 50%) compared to: public 50%, private 50% in 1973; public 53%, private 55% in 1972; public 58%, private 67% in 1971; and public 54%, private 45% in 1970. More public than private schools had special programs for Native Americans, Spanish speaking Americans or other minority students (32% public, 30% private in 1974; 21% public, 12% private in 1973; 16% public, 5% private in 1972).

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5. *What has been the major impact of a tighter budget on your minority admissions programs?*

While 60% of the schools reported "none" in answer to this question, most qualified their answer such as "none yet" or that there would likely be an effect next year. Additionally 8% of the schools (17% of the New England schools and 15% of the Southern schools) stated that they spend no money on a minority admissions program, so the question was not applicable.

Twenty percent of the schools, including 40% Western, 36% Middle States and 33% New England, said they were offering less financial aid in 1974. Also 16% (25% Middle States) of the schools linked tighter budgets to fewer incoming minority students. Additionally 14% of the schools were limiting their minority student recruiting activities. Eleven percent of the schools cited other effects such as a cutback in support services or a closer coordination among university agencies.

Discussion

The most striking conclusion one might draw from the study is that the emphasis and interest given minority admissions has peaked and is now declining. The most direct evidence of this is the decline in percent of new black freshman enrollment nationally from 6% in 1973 to 5% in 1974. These data differ from those reported by the American Council on Education (ACE), who reported 3.4% in 1974, 3.0% in 1973 and 3.5% in 1972 (Astin et al., 1973, 1974; ACE, 1972). It should be noted that ACE figures represent black freshmen in all universities and is based on a weighted sampling procedure rather than the census of nearly the entire population of large universities as is employed in this study.

In the present study the median freshman class size increased by 685, but the median number of black freshmen increased by only 6, indicating that less than 1% (6 of 685) of the increase was due to black freshmen. One might be tempted to guess that blacks are attending institutions other than large universities. However, the ACE data indicate a gradual decline in the percent of black freshmen entering all schools over the last three years: 7.4% in 1974, 7.8%

in 1973 and 8.7% in 1972 (Astin et al., 1973, 1974; ACE 1972). Other evidence of a declining trend in minority admissions is that the Middle States and Western schools showed the greatest decrease in new black freshman enrollment. These regions have been the pacesetters when the enrollment was increasing.

The worsening economic future of higher education appears to portray a particularly pessimistic outlook for minority admissions in the future. Universities already indicate the negative effects and predict they will get worse. Cartter (1974) expects that enrollment in higher education will remain relatively stable in the 1970's and decline in the 1980's. This would indicate that many schools would be less concerned with selection of students and more concerned with recruiting. However, recruiting is expensive and it may be easier and cheaper to tap the largest group of potential students available: traditional whites. While this may seem reasonable economically, the issue must be considered in a social and moral light.

The evidence seems quite clear that we have made only modest beginnings at eliminating the racism that kept minorities out of large U.S. universities for years (Sedlacek, 1974a, b; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1975). Minorities will take a longer time to adjust to a white campus (Farver, et al., 1975) and cutting minority programs will have a disasterous effect on both the admission and retention of minority students. We could very easily slide back to the point we were in 1969 with 3% new black freshmen and little institutional support for minorities.

Evidence supporting our possible slip back to "the good old days" of 1969 can be found in the trends in fewer selection criteria employed by schools, and fewer schools using open admissions. Both increased in the early 1970's and have now declined to near the 1969 level. Fear of the implications of the Buckley amendment (Fields, 1975) may have caused some schools to avoid interviews and letters of recommendation. However, the minority student is more likely to be negatively affected by this. There have been a number of studies which have indicated problems with using traditional predictors (standardized tests and high school record) to select minority students (e.g., DiCesare, et al., 1972; Pfeifer and Sedlacek, 1971, 1974; Farver, et al., 1975, Sedlacek, 1974a,b; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1975).

Here we have a classic example of institutional racism, which is defined as a pattern of collective behavior which results in negative outcomes for members of a given group or groups (minorities). The pattern may be intentional or unintentional, but it is the negative outcome that is important (Sedlacek, 1974a; Sedlacek and Brooks, 1973, 1975). At issue here is that recommendations and interviews tend to be one of the primary ways valid predictor information can be obtained from minorities since standardized tests and high school grades are particularly lacking in complete information potential for minorities (D'Costa, et al., 1974, 1975). Such is not the case for white applicants. Thus for whatever the reasons - money, a shortage of students, the Buckley amendment, etc., if there is a cutback in the number of admissions criteria employed by universities, it will discriminate unfairly against minorities by reducing the

number of entering students and decreasing our chances of selecting those minorities with the best chance to succeed at a university.

However, there are several countertrends which may serve to limit the impact of the negative directions discussed above. First, the percentage of schools using a combination of standardized tests and high school record has decreased along with the use of recommendations and interviews. The fewer schools that use this combination, the less discrimination there will be against minority students. Second, there has been an increase in special programs, particularly those for Native Americans and Spanish speaking Americans. While these programs constitute a wide range of content and support services, they do represent a commitment on the part of the universities to attend to minority students.

The importance of continuing to monitor the progress of universities in handling minority admissions and retention programs seems even more clear in times of stress in higher education. For it is in such times that we run the greatest risk of losing what gains have been made in minority student education, while we are preoccupied with seemingly more pressing issues.

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TABLE 1

Range and Frequency of Enrollments for 109 Schools by Geographical Location (Question 1)

Schools by Region	*N*	Range of Total Enroll.	Median Total Enroll.	Median Fresh. Enroll.	Median Black Fresh. Enroll.	Median Percent of Black Fresh. Enroll.
North Central	37	3,500-40,000	15,090	2,800	138	4
Southern	27	2,500-33,400	13,000	2,735	117	5
Middle States	22	2,100-44,464	11,716	2,362	218	9
Northwest	12	2,723-25,000	7,626	2,261	34	2
New England	6	7,400-18,700	8,374	2,025	40	2
Western	5	6,500-20,758	17,000	2,830	95	4
Totals	109	2,100-44,464	13,000	2,685	106	5

TABLE 2

Median Percent of Black Freshman Enrollment by Region 1969-1974

	1969	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974
North Central	3	3	3	5	5	4
Southern	2	3	3	4	5	5
Middle States	6	8	8	13	13	9
Northwest	1	1	1	2	2	2
New England	1	2	2.5	2	3	2
Western	5	8	6	4	9	4
Median Totals	3%	4%	4%	5%	6%	5%

TABLE 3

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 109 Schools
(Question 2)

Schools by Region	N	Admissions Criteria											
		Open Admissions	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Ach. Tests	Extra-curr. Activities	Recommendations	Interview	Predicted GPA	Preference to Local Res.	Preference to Alumni/ Family
North Central	37	5	10	23	16	18	1	4	7	0	1	0	0
Southern	27	2	10	11	16	9	6	3	5	1	2	0	0
Middle States	22	2	11	12	15	0	2	1	3	2	2	0	0
Northwest	12	0	9	3	3	6	1	0	2	0	2	1	1
New England	6	0	1	4	5	0	1	0	3	0	0	0	0
Western	5	0	5	1	5	2	1	0	1	0	0	0	0
Totals	109	9	46	54	60	35	12	8	21	3	7	1	1

TABLE 4

Frequencies of Admissions Criteria Used by 109 Schools to Select Black Students to Special Programs (Question 3)

Schools by Region	N	Admissions Criteria										
		Spec. Programs N	Spec. Prog. Local Res. Only	High School GPA	High School Rank	SAT	ACT	CEEB Ach. Tests	State or Local Tests	Extra-curr. Activities	Recommendations	Interview
North Central	37	26	2	1	2	0	3	0	0	0	2	0
Southern	27	10	2	2	1	0	0	2	0	0	1	0
Middle States	22	20	6	1	1	2	0	0	0	1	1	1
Northwest	12	6	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
New England	6	4	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Western	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	109	68	11	6	4	2	3	2	0	1	5	2

TABLE 5

Survey Data by Type of Institution

	N	Range of Total Enroll.	Median Total Enroll.	Median Fresh. Enroll.	Median Black Fresh. Enroll.	Median % of Black Fresh. Enroll.	% with Special Programs Primarily for Blacks	% Using Different Criteria for Blacks	% with Program for Native Americans, Spanish-speaking Americans or other Minorities
Public	89	2,723-44,464	14,800	2,800	129	4.5%	65%	8%	32%
Private	20	2,100-12,000	5,358	1,302	75	5%	50%	35%	30%
Total	109	2,100-44,464	13,000	2,685	106	5%	62%	13%	31%